

LOCAL JOB CREATION



Job creation and economic development have long been a top priority of the County Commission, but the County has dramatically accelerated its efforts over the past two years in light of the local and national economy.

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners has utilized long- and short-term efforts to promote and sustain employment opportunities in the County. As the regional hub for business, government, and education, the County has aggressively invested in infrastructure improvements and modified existing growth, environmental, economic and purchasing practices to enhance economic opportunities and to promote job creation.

To date, the County has secured more than \$20 million in federal stimulus funds for local projects. And in this year's budget, the County invested \$97.7 million in the local economy through infrastructure improvements, such as roadways and stormwater systems, to create more than 800 full-time jobs.



Vision 2020

Launched in 2006, Vision 2020 is a program that collaborates with local economic development partners, such as the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, the Tallahassee-Leon County Economic Development Council, and the FSU Foundation to actively evaluate investment opportunities in the area. The goal is to enhance the research assets in the region to compete with the country's top technology hubs for business, capital, and talent by leveraging the efforts of our local institutions for higher learning.

Growth and Environmental Management

The County waived permit fees for the extension of environmental management permits. This action allowed "shovel ready" development projects to remain valid until the economic downturn runs its course. The County's efforts saved developers the money and time associated with the reactivation of expired approvals.

The Board also authorized ten projects to proceed through the development review and approval process with associated fees deferred until the project's building permit phase. This proposal was designed to reduce the upfront costs of development by delaying the payment of review fees until after the proposal has been approved, thereby assisting with the proposed project's construction financing and/or marketing the site to potential developers.

Recovery Zones

The County and City Commissions have jointly approved the financing for the construction of a 37,000 square-foot mixed-use building for the northeast corner of North Monroe Street and East Tennessee Street. Aptly named Gateway Tallahassee, construction began in September 2010 for this \$14.5 million mixed-use retail and office site. This three-story urban landscape will include a subterranean parking garage, a Walgreens on the street level, and two floors of office space, while meeting LEED certification standards.



A tract of land around Capital Circle Southeast, known as the Flea Market Tract, is considered an out parcel, an area that is difficult to manage environmentally. The Flea Market Tract is very desirable as it could be used for future development, and it eliminates the need to acquire right-of-way from the numerous businesses located on the north side of Capital Circle. It also allows for the linkage of a southern greenway connecting to the St. Marks Trail.

Landscaping, including wildflowers, bark chips and hammocks of trees and shrubs will be put in place to increase the aesthetics and safety, and a 10-foot meandering trail and bicycle lane will be put in place to increase the level of pedestrian-bicycle access and create a multi-modal roadway. The improvements to Capital Circle will also accommodate future transit service with the incorporation of more right-of-way, which allows for a wider 36-foot median.

Energy

In April 2010, Leon County was the first county in the state to create a Countywide energy improvement district to help residents finance the weatherization of their homes and businesses through a voluntary non-ad valorem assessment to lower utility bills and provide more opportunities for green jobs. The County's efforts compliment the local funding received from the economic stimulus package for the development and training of a green workforce.

Purchasing

In December 2009, the Board demonstrated its commitment to local businesses by enhancing the County's Local Preference Policy to provide local businesses (based in Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, or Gadsden Counties) an opportunity to match the lowest competitive bid for construction projects.

In July, Leon County broke ground on the new 12,000-square-foot Eastside Branch Library, which will be the first permanent library for the residents of eastern Leon County. The new building will replace the leased storefront currently known as the Parkway Branch Library, which dates back to 1982.

The current branch has limited space for materials and collections, and unlike other branches, it cannot host storytelling, book discussion groups or cultural programs due to its small size. Despite these shortcomings, per-square-foot circulation at the Parkway Branch is nearly double that of the next highest branch. A new building will enable the residents of the rapidly growing eastern sector of Leon County to have library service comparable to the rest of the County.

The County worked to maximize the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) attributes of the new facility, which will include an array of solar panels on the roof to generate power consumed by the building from sunlight. The library is expected to be the first County building to achieve LEED-Gold standards. The new building will include structural insulated panels and a stucco finish.



\$1.8M

Sidewalk and Intersection Improvements

\$3.4M

Lake Jackson Ecopassage

\$13.7M

Capital Circle Southeast

\$1.17M

Energy Upgrades to County Facilities and an Educational Program

\$175,863

Enhanced Pretrial Monitoring Program, the Justice Assessment Center and Equipment for Law Enforcement

The Lafayette Street Pedestrian Tunnel has been a project of significant priority in Leon County for the last several years, but because of limited funding and high-bid prices in the past, it has not been built. Lafayette Street is not on the state roadway system, so local funding was required to match the funds.

